

Vibrant vistas

Beyond the Mountains
at Boise Art Museum through Oct. 15.
Writer and poet Norman Weinstein
speaks on the subject, First Thursday,
Sept. 7 at 5:30 p.m. Info: 345-8330.

When someone mentions a landscape painting in Boise we typically have visions of mountains or foothills

with perhaps a few trees or a stream. However, is that all there is in the realm of contemporary landscape painting? Imagine an unusually long, thin, horizontally oriented painting. Upon the wooden panel are not mountains, or even a forest, but a bridge. Looking closer you see tiny automobiles crossing the bridge; some seem to be police vehicles chasing a white van.

This work, by Jason Phillips, is part of BAM's current offering, *Beyond the*

Mountains: The Contemporary American Landscape. While associations with O.J.'s high speed chase in the infamous white Bronco are evident, this work and others convince viewers that a contemporary approach to landscape, as with all art, involves every aspect of life.

This exhibit is actually the first part of BAM's *Now and Then: Images of the American Landscape 1827-1999*, a series of three landscape-based exhi-

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Glen Rubsamen *Sunset and Western*, 1998, oil on panel, 36"x96"

bitions. The second phase will look at the work of artists from the Hudson River School, from the 19th century, and the final phase will explore the American West following the Lewis and Clark expedition. The current show includes a few pieces from the upcoming exhibits to whet the appetite for what is on the horizon.

This is an impressive undertaking and a wise move for the museum. The general public is not always appreciative of newer, more cerebral and less straightforward art. This show bridges the gap between the experimental and the traditional, while also charting the progress and making some comparisons along the way. For anyone who takes a little time, the history of the nation's land-

scape tradition will unfold naturally.

One fine reason for Boiseans to spend an afternoon with this exhibit is the importance of many of the artists. Rarely in this area do we get a chance to see work by such notable artists. Hudson River artists were named after the region in New York where most of them started painting and gained recognition. Three of the greats from that art historical grouping, Asher B. Durand, Thomas Cole and Albert Bierstadt, are included here.

It is not just work by some of the fathers of American landscape that is of importance. This show explores contemporary trends and includes some major artists of the present, as well. Pop-era favorites Ed Ruscha and Alex

Katz are represented, as is Robert Moskowitz who made a name for himself in the '80s. *River Bank*, by Bay area artist Wayne Thiebaud, is a prime example of his mastery of painting. Brilliant touches of color resonate on a field of muted peach.

One experimental piece will likely gather a bit of attention. Jane Dickson's oil and acrylic on blue carpet (stretched like a canvas) is reminiscent of both black-velvet Elvis paintings and the product of a Lite Brite toy. Hopefully, the proximity of less traditional pieces like this to 19th century masterpieces will help us all to see landscape as more than just an entity to be protected by the BLM.

—Tyrus Clutter